

oppose the work of a category of professionals, the scientists, but also indirectly influence the fate of the innocents who could benefit from scientific progress, and who may die, often in agony, without new treatments. It is now established in the international scientific community that stem cell research represents probably the most promising field of investigation for the treatment of many degenerative diseases. The veto against embryonic stem cell research condemns millions of people to a life with little hope of cure. This could turn into a death sentence for millions of people. When a policy deliberately exposes millions of people to the risk of premature death,

this tragic waste of life has to be justified, with stringent arguments that leave no room for any reasonable doubt that this was inevitable, or was required to prevent an even greater evil. The veto on embryonic stem cell research, instead, is based on a belief (that the embryo is a person and should be treated as such), and therefore it is based on an article of faith. Democratic societies are characterised by tolerance and the cohabitation of different ideas and faiths. In no democratic society, however, should the life of a person be put at risk on the basis of the beliefs or faiths of others. Belief, faith and conscience are essentially personal; when they are not simply permitted to

individuals but imposed on societies, freedom is replaced by tyranny.

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